

[Cowboy Hardships]

Interview

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COWBOY HARDSHIPS

I was teaching near, Ranger Lake, (Long.103 Lat. 33 1/2), Lea County, New Mexico during the first part of 1917 and boarded with Mr. Boss Beal'e family. It was a severe cold winter, and the cattle men were having a great deal of work to do to keep the cattle from drifting in to the hills south and west. The cattle were weak and the grass was short, so it was necessary to keep them where they could be fed.

"Of course, now since there are so many fences," he said, and smaller pastures, we do not have the trouble that we had in the country twenty or thirty years ago." Ranger Lake had been headquarters for a ranch operated by the Beall Brothers.

"The first drift fence that was built by the XIT syndicate company operated by the company that built the Texas Capitol building in 1886. This fence was built west from the State Line Fence and built to keep the cattle from drifting into the southwest of New Mexico. Every year thousands of range cattle from Colorado, Kansas and Northern parts of Texas and New Mexico would go as far south as they could. These herds were great by the time they reached the cap rock between here and Roswell C18 - N. Mex.

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Joe Cook and Jim Rogers were cowboys from one of the headquarters of the LFD, which was located south of Littlefield Texas. These boys were sent out to New Mexico with others to turn their cattle towards the southeast course into Texas. But they could not handle their herd, with the straggling cattle that came and there was no way to turn them against the north and east winds, and the driving snows and rains. Tim took a bad cold and Joe had to care take of him and so on the cattle drifted. Joe and Tim housed up in a small shack that had been built by some trappers near Portales Springs. At night Joe sat by Tim expecting every breath to be the last. fearing to leave him for fear he would come back and find Tim dead. So for several days they stayed in the cabin with out food and medicine.

Tim said, "Joe, you are starving, and I am dying, so you go and see if you can find something to eat, and get help." Joe refused at first, but Tim when in his rational moments, begged so hard that at last Joe consented to go for help. The day was cloudy, but the snow was not so thick in the air as it had been for the last three days. Joe placed all the fuel he could find in the cabin near an old stove and put water where Tim could get it..

"So long, old chap," said Joe, "I'll be back with somthin' to chew," and leaving his partner whom he did not expect to find alive again, he headed due east, as he rode the snow came thicker and the wind blew harder, but one he, went as fast as his hungry horse could travel. When night came on he stopped in a clump of bushes and [?] he had no idea where he was, he had lost all sense of direction.

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He tethered his horse on the windward side of the bushes and huddled up in the center of the thicket. He passed the night nearly froze and in his dreams he could see Tim's white face, and dream of good things to eat and warm fires. He was awakened by the [?] whinnying of his horse, at early dawn. The horse was thro'wing his head around and looking in the direction of the northeast. "What is it?". Blue." asked Joe. "Well, if you know where we're going, you know more than I do." The horse started in the northeast direction

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and seemed to be anxious to go. They traveled perhaps about five or six miles, when Joe notices tracks in the snow, horse tracks and a cattle tracks, as if they were being driven. In a short time he knew by the increased number of tracks that some cowboys must be not far away. At last, he saw smoke in the distance The horse which was nearly past traveling headed that way, but staggered. Joe dismounted and led the horse, staggering as he went, but he was set on reaching that camp fire. He began to halloo and he sighted some cowboys, who had heard his calls. The boys came lopping towards him.

"Hie, there, Joe Cook, you Ol-sun-uv-a-gun, we've been huntin' fur you and Tim for a week. Where did you hide yourself? Bi, gosh, boys, he's dead, "and Will Green ran up to him and picked him up. "He's starved and froze to death." They carried him to the fire and put him down on some saddle blankets. "Get him some whiskey, boys, " and they poured all the whiskey that they could ge down him. Get some of that hot coffe coffee and git him 4 -4- [?] somethin' to eat," and the boys worked on him until he was fed and warme. He told them that Tim was awful sick. "He' pro' bly dead by now," and dropped his head in his hands and sobbed. "Now, Joe, tell us where we can find him and we'll bring him back sound and you git some sleep you'self." Two cowboys went for a doctor, and several of the boys, took food and blankets to bring Tim. When they got there Tim was unconscious. They revived him soon and gave him hot food and the next morning, they put him on a horse and rode twelve miles each one them holding him. They did not expect him to be alive when they reached the camp, but he did not seem any worse, and soon the doctor from the ranch had him and Joe doped out and they were put in a chuck wagon and taken back to headquarters.

[?] the two weeks of severe weather, the cowboys could do nothing but take care of the cattle and horses at the headquarters. When the storm broke, Joe and Tim were about recovered and they went on the roundup below [Port los?] Springs. A rider from below Tatum came up and told them that the drift Fence had been out and tho'usand of cattle had fallen off the caprock and cowboys could make good money skinning the frozen cows. Cowboys and men from all over the country went down and as hides were bringing better

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money that steers, the wholesale skinning began. The brands were some of them well known and some of them were traced back up in Colorado and Kansas and Oklahoma. But to the skinner belonged the hide, tho'ught he had to have a bill of sale to the hide. This caused considerable trouble for some brands were not located. Well that was a spring when all the boys had a little money even if the cowman did lose